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OLL86-0172  
15 January 1986

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Office of Legislative Liaison

THROUGH: Administrative Officer  
Office of Legislative Liaison

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FROM:   
Chief, Legislation Division  
Office of Legislative Liaison

SUBJECT: Computer Bill Service

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1. On 18 December 1985, members of the Legislation Division and the Deputy Director, Office of Legislative Liaison,  received a briefing from Ms. Suzanne Walker, who represents Washington On-Line. This company offers an information retrieval system called the "Bill Text Tracking System". They obtain a copy of every bill introduced in Congress (also updated versions of bills) as soon as it is available at the Government Printing Office (GPO), run it through a scanner, and have it available to their customers on a computer. The user can then call up any bill on a screen using a number, sponsor, or key words and print out as many copies of the bill as are needed. I believe the Legislation Division would benefit greatly from having this service and being able to obtain bills on a very timely basis. Ms. Walker told us they are looking into making available committee and conference reports which would be included in the same subscription price as the bills. This would be a very valuable feature to us as well.

2. Currently, the Legislation Division reviews approximately one-fourth of all bills introduced in the House and Senate. Every bill introduced comes into the Acquisitions Branch/WH from GPO and they sort out the bills the Legislation Division requests, discarding the rest. Because of uncontrollable delays with GPO and the Acquisition Branch, we are having to wait weeks before we receive our ten copies of each bill we request. The staffing situation has greatly deteriorated in the Acquisitions Branch/WH over the past year and the job of sorting bills and hearings has fallen on the Branch Chief. None of the four disseminator positions in Acquisitions are filled at the present time, and it is unlikely

the situation will improve in the near future. An alternative to Acquisitions sorting through the bills would be to send the whole bill subscription (ten copies of every bill introduced in Congress) to the Legislation Division. This, however, would create a tremendous paperwork burden for the division. Having the text of all bills on-line would be a much more efficient way of doing business. The only way we can obtain bills on a timely basis, at present, is to have an Agency courier pick up one copy from the House or Senate Document Room a few days after introduction.

3. Ms. Walker informs us that we would need an IBM computer (or something similar) in order to hook up to their system, as well as a high-speed printer. The annual subscription cost for the Bill Text Tracking System is \$3,500.00, with a one-time initial fee of \$750. I recommend that the Office of Legislative Liaison go forward with obtaining the necessary equipment and contracting with Washington On-Line so that we can begin this service in the next few months.



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I hereby approve contracting with Washington On-Line for the Bill Text Tracking System, and acquiring the necessary hardware for the Legislation Division to get the system in operation.

APPROVED:

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Director, Office of Legislative Liaison

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Date

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